

# Traditional Marquesan agriculture and subsistence: Ownership, division of labor, feasting, drought/famine, and fishing/canoe-travel. Part III of IV

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## LAND AND TREE OWNERSHIP AND LABOR

Tautain (1897:541) noted that not everyone was a land-owner. Only the “the chiefly families (*Papa Hakaiki*) and those of the ‘*Akatia* or ‘*Anatia*’<sup>1</sup> had this right.” A garden might have a different owner than the land it was on, even to the extent of breadfruit trees with owners for each branch (Tautain 1897:541).

In the Marquesas, trees and land apparently could be owned separately.<sup>2</sup> Crook (1952:cxv) writes that “The Property, consisting of Ground, and the trees which it produces, is accurately known by the owner ...” But that, “Property, in land, or trees, altho’ accurately known by the owner, is exposed to the encroachment of powerful superiors” (Crook 1952:xxxvii). Robarts (1974:271) also comments on land disputes and adoption: “... in case of a Quarrell in the same tribe, families thus united all Keep on one side and protects one another from being disinherited, as is very often the case thro a powerfull, churlish neighbor.”

Crook (1952:xxxvii-xxxviii) thought that “The Ridges between the Vallies, being productive of little else than reeds, are not distributed into private property; but some kind of claim is laid to them by the ruling Chiefs of the adjacent Vallies.”

Kiatonui gave a plantation to his sister to keep her alive during a famine. Later on, Robarts married her (Robarts 1974:123):

“[ca. 1800] I was well situated. My family lived on their own plantation, and I had a large one of my own that I had purchased. My servants took care of it and one that I took possession of, as the family that it belonged to was al dead. I had a right to it, as I took possession first after the de-cease of the family. No one dared dispute my right. I was their head in war. I headed them in

war against their enemies and was at every battle in the heat of it. But to lift my hand against my relations I could never consent to.” (Robarts 1974:153).

Thomson (Craig 1980:26) writes [ca. 1840]: “When land is transferred by marriage, (or rather by the temporary union of the parties) a feast is given for the whole valley, and consists of pigs, breadfruit, *popoi*, etc.”

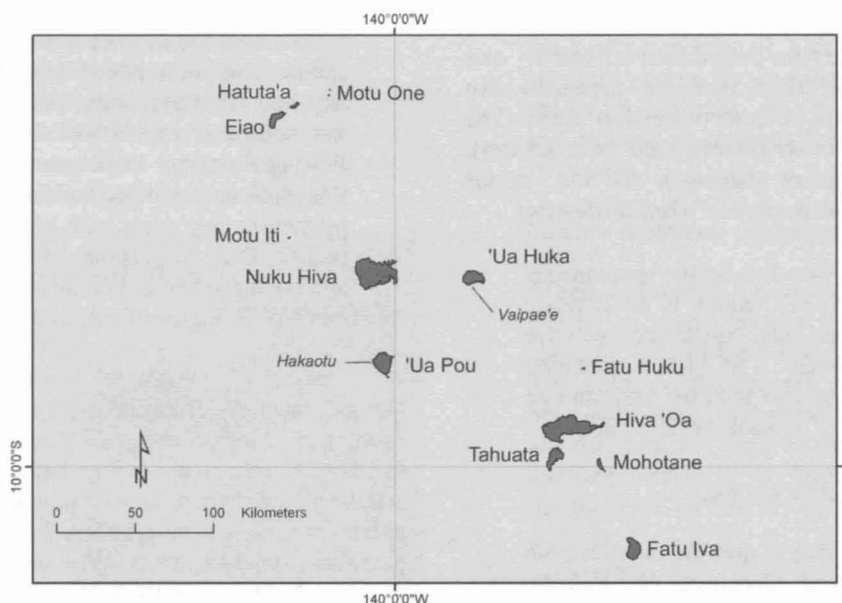


Figure 1. A map of the Marquesas Islands.

## Inheritance

Robarts comments on the inheritance of land and trees:

“It is to [be] observed that [in the case of] A man being possessed of land, and [who] has several children, the eldest son and daughter gets the greatest share of land, and the others in proportion. When a man has a small lot of land, the children gets trees, to one a few, to one a few, to another [a few].” (Robarts 1974:267)

<sup>1</sup> Southern Marquesan ‘*Anati*’a and the northern ‘*akati*’a are cognate. Cf. Proto Central East Polynesian /Langatila.

<sup>2</sup> In spite of a century of French-inspired land tenure, vestiges of this remain; I have witnessed on Nuku Hiva vehement arguments about ownership and use rights of specific trees.

And that “as soon as [it is] born, the lands for the child's inheritance is pointed out” (Robarts 1974:270). Likely using information obtained from Robarts, Langsdorff writes that:

“Every child from the moment of its birth inherits from its parents at least one bread-fruit tree, and this tree is tabooed even to the father and mother. If the parents are so poor that they have not a tree to settle upon the child, one is planted for it immediately by this means a provision is made for the maintenance of the child, since one or two bread-fruit trees is sufficient to support a man the whole year round.” (Langsdorff 1813: 135)

### Labor

#### *‘Akati ‘a/‘anati ‘a and kikino*

When Europeans arrived, Marquesan society was broadly divided into those who owned land – *‘akati ‘a* – and those who did not – *kikino*. These groupings appear to have been defined on the basis of land ownership alone. The *‘akati ‘a* included the *haka ‘iki* (chiefs), *toa* (war leaders), *tau ‘a* (inspirational priests or shamans), and the various *tuhuka* (specialists)<sup>3</sup>. Crook describes *‘akati ‘a* lifestyle:

“[ca. 1798] Persons who live on the spontaneous produce of their Grounds, which is made ready for their food by servants, can of course have little stated employment. The Men, associating little with the Women, rise with the Day, and go to the Tabbu house ...” (Crook 1952:cxxxiv)

And the situation of *po ‘i kikino*:

“Servants, although free to quit the families with which they have lived, Occupants of Grounds, and other dependants, are liable to be killed by the chief proprietor, if he findes them taking fruit etc. which they were forbidden to share.” (Crook 1952:cxxxvii)

Robarts adds:

“... the Inhabitants lives up the different vallies, every one on his own lott of land. [There are] others who have lost their lands in quarrels; for the weakest is shure to loose. The people live on the land of great men to watch the Bread fruit, Coco nut, Plantain and cloth trees, and are always ready to Join their Patron in case of a quarrel with any other party.” (Robarts 1974:253)

Robarts notes that chiefs could be deposed and would go with their families in canoes to seek new land.

<sup>3</sup> Dening (1971, 1980) and Thomas (1990) discuss Marquesan society and its elites in detail.

Landowners could demand food from tenants:

“[ca. 1800] No chieftain can force a tribute from any one excepting those on his private estate, unless they chuse to give it. When a Chieftain is mild and generous among his subjects, he gains the love and esteem of his people and in times of plenty Keeps his Altar well supplied with food, fish and, at times a large Hog is roasted. This is open to the petty Chiefs and warriors. By this means he secures their attachment, but if he is selfish and pressing his people, they frequently revolt against him and, in the end, him and his family are drove from their Inheritance.” (Robarts 1974:266)

Langsdorff, on the power of chiefs, writes that they had little, and definitely not beyond their valleys:

“This chief, the king of the valley as he is to be called, is in possession, and probably the hereditary heir to several groves of bread-fruit, cocoa-nut, and banana trees, and as such is capable of feeding a number of persons; they probably, for this reason, consider themselves as under his protection, yet every one still remains his own judge. The intercourse of the islanders one among the other is regulated principally by the taboos.” (Langsdorff 1813:131)

Lisiansky (1814:80) relates that Robarts said of “kings” that, “In a fruitful season, they have a right to a fourth part of the produce of the lands of their subjects; and in other seasons, an apportionment according to circumstances.” And, “There are rich and poor here. The rich have plantations, houses, and canoes; the poor have nothing, and pass their days like others of the same station in the rest of the world” (Lisiansky 1814:84).

Porter found that Kiatonui (*haka ‘iki* of Taioha ‘e) controlled quite a deal of production:

“[1813] Gattanewa owns much land, and his tenants pay him in kind. When presents are to be made, he called upon them for his due in hogs, cocoa-nuts, bananas, or bread-fruit; other land owners follow his example, the contributors assemble before his house, one with two or more coconuts, a bunch of bananas, one or two bread-fruit, a hog, a stalk of sugar-cane, or a root of the tarra. When all are collected, Gattanewa, his son, or grandson, takes the lead, and they march in one line for the camp, to the number of two or three hundred.” (Porter 1970:64)

American expectations of respect and rank went unfulfilled in Marquesan society:

"Gattanewa has this servants, who perform for him and his family many domestic services, such as cooking, bringing water, &c. It does not appear however that he has any claims on their services; he gives them food, and as long as it suits them they stay. They mix with his family, occupy the same room, and a stranger, on entering the house of Gattanewa, would not know him from one of his domestics." (Porter 1970:65)

Thomson describes *pekio* – supplementary husbands – but he clearly had a shallow understanding of the institution:

"[ca. 1840] Few among the lower class, that is those who do not possess any land, ever live with a wife, not having a house of their own, they commonly live promiscuously, or attach themselves as a friend (for they spurn the name of servant) to some householder, do the menial work of the house, and then his master's wife becomes the joint wife of both." (Craig 1980:26)

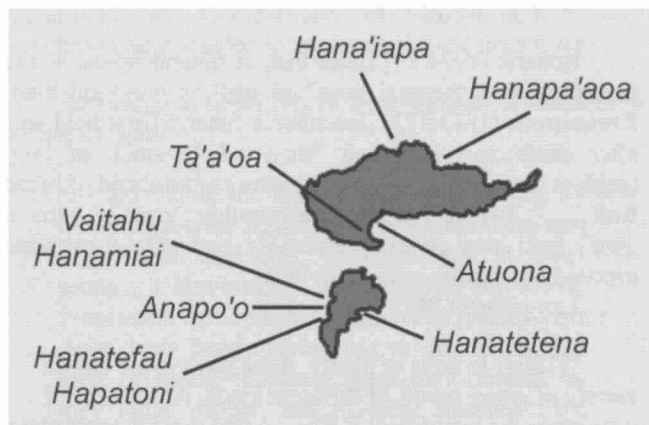


Figure 2. Tahuata and Hiva 'Oa showing place names mentioned in text. Fatu Huku and Mohotane islands removed for clarity.

Thomson describes Marquesan power relations in terms familiar from his English upbringing:

"The government of these islands is feudal. The chief who holds most land has generally most dependants, and consequently is the strongest; rank is held according to power. Sometimes one is regarded as principal chief as upon Tahuata (Figure 2) and Uapoa ['Ua Pou]; generally, however, there are two or three in each valley; every landowner being independent; in case of attack, or to punish their neighbours for any offence, all would unite, but without giving a chief command to anyone; indeed, in such desultory warfare

there is nothing like command, everyone fighting independently. The chief of Tahuata, Totete [Iotete], is the most important perhaps in the group, and the only one who receives a salute from ships of war; he is saluted by Britain, American, and France. He is rather past the prime of life, immensely robust and heavy, possessing a pretty large proportion of the national character ..." (Craig 1980:45)

### Gender and other divisions of labor

According to Robarts,

"The ladies of rank frequently make their own mats, which is very fine. Others makes cloth Turbans & Bandages. The poor people, sometimes the husband, or wife, cooks the food... The old men frequently nurses the children, and at intervals makes line out of the thread of old coco nut husk neatly platted. This they make of different sorts – some for working of fans, spears, war spades, Battle axes, etc., fastening their houses and sewing or lacing their canoes." (Robarts 1974:260)

Porter's comments on the gender division of labor are:

"Their [women's] occupations are wholly domestic; to them belongs the manufacturing of cloth, the care of the house and the children. The men cultivate the ground, catch fish, build canoes and houses, and protect their families; they are the artificers, and as they have few wants, they are perfect in the knowledge necessary to supply them." (Porter 1970:117)

### Communal work

Crook notes:

"If a stone pavement is to be raised, a Canoe to be made, Tarro to be planted, or any other kind of work to be performed by a number of men, hands may always be procured, by feasting them before hand, and telling what they must do in return; and for a short time they will be active, and industrious." (Crook 1952:cxxxv)

Porter's description of the building of "Madisonville" suggests the authority and organizational skill of *haka'iki* and the vast labor they could concentrate on a particular project when needed.

"On the 3d November, upwards of four thousand natives, from the different tribes, assembled at the camp with materials for building, and before night they had completed a dwelling-house for myself, and another place for the officers, a sail

loft, a cooper's shop, and a place for our sick, a bake-house, a guard-house, and a shed for the sentinel to walk under. ... [These were] fifty feet in length, built in the usual fashion of the country, and of a proportioned width and height."

"Nothing could exceed the regularity with which these people carried on their work, without any chief to guide them, without confusion, and without much noise. They performed their labor with expedition and neatness. Every man appeared to be master of his business, and every tribe appeared to strive which should complete their house with most expedition, and in the most perfect manner." (Porter 1970:63)

And about transporting cannon over precipitous trails:

"Of all the labors, that which most surprised me was, carrying the gun to the mountains. I have since, with much difficulty, and at the hazard of breaking my neck, traveled the path by which it was carried, or rather have scrambled along the sides of the precipices, and climbed the most perpendicular rocks and mountains, to the summits of which they succeeded in raising it; and I never should have believed it possible that a people so devoid of artificial means of assisting labor, should have been able to perform a task so truly herculean. I inquired by what manner they had divided the labor among themselves, in order that each might share his proportion of it. They told me that they had carried it by valleys, that is, the people of one valley, had agreed to take it a certain distance, when it was to be received and carried on by those of another valley, and so on to the top of the mountain." (Porter 1970:63-4)

In contrast to many nineteenth-century European ideas about Polynesians, Gracia (1843:148) remarks on how active and industrious the Marquesans were. He characterizes them as, "...among the most active of all oceanic peoples I would place at the front some Marquesan tribes, even ahead of the peoples of Hawaii and Tahiti". His description of communal work is similar to that of Porter and he emphasizes the festive atmosphere associated with it:

"[ca. 1840] Certaines constructions, ou d'apparat, comme *pavés sacrés*, ou d'utilité, comme canots, etc., viennent encore occuper leur temps, et l'on peut dire d'une manière fort active dans certaines moments d'élan. Vous les voyez alors, et vous les entendez souvent même d'une lieue, travailler en troupe à ces travaux qui viennent les

animer. Ils n'aiment même guère le travail, s'il n'est accompagné de bruit, de cris et d'un certain tapage et entourage de fête, qui en fait pour eux un jeu et une agréable récréation. D'autres fois encore, ce sera pour préparer une vallée à une plantation de *taro*..."<sup>4</sup> (Gracia 1843:149)

## KO'IKA/KO'INA<sup>5</sup>

Feasts – or *ko'ika* – were a key part of Marquesan society. Below are passages relating to specific *ko'ika* or various kinds of *ko'ika*. Robarts describes one feast in a two or three-month series of funeral rites:

"[ca. 1800] Thus commences the grand festival of ending the ceremonies of a deceased prophet, King or Chieftain. The general dance leads off. The Ladies dance on a fine matt in front of their houses. The warriors dance on the play ground in great numbers. The houses are filled with strangers who comes from all parts of the Island. During the festival, a number of marriages take place. At these times this is great plenty of food provided, such as whole hogs, roasted fish, baked sweet plantains and prepared breadfruit. This feast is free for 3 days ..." (Robarts 1974:60)

Robarts (1974:89) states that, at funeral feasts, he was presented with "several hogs" as well as non-food items. Krusenstern (1813:173) describes a funeral feast held soon after death and including "their whole stock of hogs, (seldom eaten but on these occasions,) of taro, and of breadfruit ...." Twelve months later another "equally extravagant" feast was given, presumably part of the memorial proceedings for the same individual.

Langsdorff (1813:158) writes:

"[1804] In days of plenty, these gay people have a variety of amusements of different kinds. At the time of year when the bread-fruit is ripe, so that there is great abundance of it, the chiefs and principal people of the valley make popular festivals: for this purpose they collect swine, cocoa-nuts, bananas, and many kinds of roots, so as to feast the people for some time. The principal of these assemblies are the dancing festivals."

Gracia (1843:72-73) describes "*Koina tapa vau*:" a harvest festival in which tapu on foods and on war is suspended. Thomson (Craig 1980:26) mentions marriage feasts "given for the whole valley, and consists of pigs, breadfruit, *popoi*,<sup>6</sup> etc." Of *ko'ika* in general, he writes:

"[ca. 1840] At a Marquesas feast all the people of the place, often the whole island attend clothed in their finest. Every landowner brings cooked

<sup>4</sup> He goes on to contrast this with Hawai'i where every farmer works alone on his own taro patch.

<sup>5</sup> Northern and southern Marquesan cognates.

<sup>6</sup> Beaten bread fruit paste (Addison 2007:33-57).



pigs and *popoi* in proportion to the number of his dependents; at these there is a greater variety in their songs than upon other occasions, and their dances are often very obscene, and sometimes they are licentious to such a degree that a ruined constitution soon terminating in death is often the punishment of the unhappy female. The most common occasions of their feasts are to welcome important visitors, in honor of particular individuals; at the commencement or conclusion of any important public work and upon some occasions connected with their tabu system; the men seem all to join in the song; in general the females sit outside merely as spectators, except a few who join in the dance, etc." (Craig 1980:35-36).

Delmas (1927:122-123) describes *ko'ika hakahiti*<sup>7</sup> or vying with food between two chiefs or chiefess with their people supporting them. One on 'Ua Pou saw four hundred hogs killed.<sup>8</sup>

#### *'Ahui and preparation for ko'ika*

The numerous occasions for which *ko'ika* were held and their display and competitive nature required substantial amounts of food. The institution of *'ahui* or the temporary prohibition on use aided in amassing the required food.

According to Crook, there were regional differences in the use of *'ahui*:

"At Tahouatta, the use of the Rahue, called by the Marquesans, ahhue, is little known. This sort of political embargo, so customary at other groups, is however not unfrequent at Nuguheva. Proprietors of Grounds occasionally restrict their dependents from making use of one or another kind of foode produced upon their estates, as they judge proper; and in some instances, the Chief exercises the same authority throughout a district. To ahhue the Cocoa Nut, a very young Cocoa Nut is tied up with a shred of Cloth, in a conspicuous place, within the Grounds upon which the restriction is laid.<sup>9</sup> To ahhue the Kavva, one of the plants is plucked up with the Root, and tied up in the house of the proprietor.

"There are likewise, at Nuguheva, persons who have the property of the Sea in the Bays, lying opposite to the place of their residence. These

ahhue the Fish, in those parts of the Bay belonging to them, by sticking on the beach, or in the shallow water, a pole, with a bit of white cloth hanging to it." (Crook 1952:cxliii)

Fanning (1833:182) notes that a grass rope tied around a breadfruit tree meant that anyone could help themselves.

Krusenstern (1813:170) writes that, at Taioha'e, a feast had been planned for six months "and eight months longer were to pass before the feast began; although no other preparations were required than to make a new place upon which the dance is to be celebrated."<sup>10</sup> *'Ahui* in preparation for this *ko'ika* may be why the Russians could get no hogs, little fishing was going on, and provisions in general were scarce at Taioha'e. In addition, Krusenstern (1813:171) reports that the "high priest" was very sick and expected to die—a death that would call for a large outlay of food.

Porter noted:

"The Tayees<sup>11</sup> had, however, a short time before our arrival, lost one of their priests, of the greatest note, who had been killed by an ambuscade of the Happa's;<sup>12</sup> and this circumstance had occasioned a taboo of the strictest nature to be established, which was now in full force, and continued as long as we remained on the island." (Porter 1970:38)

This may explain why supplies at Taioha'e were so scarce for the Americans, whereas the Hapa'a and the Taipi had plenty.

According to Stevenson, some form of *'ahui* continued into the late 1800s. Stevenson (1971:47-48) reports "the chief" who placed a restriction on the reef and on coconuts at Anaho in 1888. And "A little back from the beach, and not a half a mile from Anaho, I was the more amazed to find a cluster of well-doing breadfruits heavy with their harvest;" these were "tapu" and could only be harvested by the owner (Stevenson 1971:51).

Tautain (1897:642) mentions that a marriage feast (*ko'ika hu'ona*) had to wait for pigs to be fattened and breadfruit to be collected, pointing to the importance of the interrelationship of feasts and the agricultural cycle.

#### *Hosts and Guests*

Display and abundance of food was surely an important part of *ko'ika* but, according to Crook, not a necessary one:

<sup>7</sup> *Hakahiti* could be glossed "inflationary." Another possible meaning is "to cause to ascend" and may refer to the Marquesan belief that the number of hogs presented at commemorative feasts (*mau*) positively affected the condition of the deceased. Whether this was traditionally conceptualized as "elevation" is unclear.

<sup>8</sup> Swine were important symbols of wealth and prestige in the Marquesas. Their husbandry will be covered in Part IV.

<sup>9</sup> Élie le Guillou (1844:130) writes, perhaps of Nuku Hiva, that coconut trees were "tabooed" by a strip of tapa on the trunk.

<sup>10</sup> This may refer to either building a new *tohua* (ceremonial/dance plaza) or to renovating or expanding an existing one (see Addison 2006a:653-659).

<sup>11</sup> Te'i'i: people of Taioha'e.

<sup>12</sup> Hapa'a: people living in the valleys between Taioha'e and Taipivai.

"It is not, however, supposed that such numerous Visitors can find adequate provisions to supply their appetites. This is often less expected, as perhaps not long before the same Visitors have laid waste the Scene of their transient amusements, by hostile incursions. They carry with them a scanty provision, and usually get a very scanty addition to it, whatever their personal importance may be at home." (Crook 1952:cxv)

At a *ko'ika* at A'akapa visitors were there from all over the island. "They had assembled in three Tahouwas [tohua], one of which appeared to contain several thousand persons. ... The whole number appeared to be at least 10,000 ..." Kava was "the only provision with which the company was supplied by their hosts..." The *ko'ika* lasted for two or three days (Crook 1952:clxxvii).<sup>13</sup>

### RAIDING AND CROP DESTRUCTION

Crop destruction may have been an important means of limiting an opponent's ability to display competitively at *ko'ika*. (for more on Marquesan competition and aggression see Addison 2006a:304 and Addison in press). Crook points out that coconut and breadfruit were special targets:

"Both these trees suffer greatly from the hostile incursions, the invaders destroying the breadfruit trees by stripping off its bark, and the Cocoa Nut tree by beating to pieces the heart which grows between the branches where they shoot out from the top of the lofty stem." (Crook 1952:cxix-cxxx)

One account of a specific instance on Tahuata reads: "About this time [early 1798], the Ahhoutinne [Ahutini] made a fresh incursion, and not only seized again Enapoo [Anapo'o], but penetrated to Ennamei [Hanamiai], and destroyed the Cocoa Nut Trees in the Vallies"<sup>14</sup> (Crook 1952:cliii). Ta'a'oa and Atuona on Hiva 'Oa were also busy destroying each other's food trees: "They must, however, at present be considerably diminished by the unusual slaughter recently made; and their fertility, which was very luxuriant, has been greatly impeded, by their mutual devastation of the Bread Fruit, and Cocoa Nut Trees" (ibid.:clix).

On Nuku Hiva (Figure 3), Crook accompanied a party from Taioha'e going to a *ko'ika* at A'akapa. They rested one day at Haka'ehu and:

"...had carried with them some Ma, some Boge [poke], and a few Cocoa Nuts; and they obtained a few more, and some breadfruit, only, from the Inhabitants, who might have been able to supply them more abundantly but for the consequences of a War, which had sometime before subsisted between the Teie [Te'i'i] and the Bua [Pua<sup>15</sup>]. Some of the former, being on a visit at Hek-keahu, were killed, in a sudden quarrel. In return for their breach of hospitality, the Teie fell upon the Bua by surprise, slaughtered a considerable number of them, and *laid their Country waste; barking the Bread fruit, and beating the hearts of the Cocoa Nut trees*. Many of these remained in that Condition, and were the only evidences of ravages by War, which Mr. Crook observed at Nuguheva." (Crook 1952:clxxvii, italics mine)

"Not long afterward [after the *ko'ika* at A'akapa], the Puhheokko [Puhioho?] made a sudden inroad upon Hakappa, and killed a considerable number of the Fattetoka ['Atitoka']"<sup>16</sup> (Crook 1952:clxxviii).

Robarts (1974:60) describes war and defenders retreating from a pass: "The enemy follows them close and gets into plantations, destroys all before him, burns the houses, spoils the breadfruit and cocoa nut trees." He writes of Puama'u on Hiva 'Oa that: "It is ... marked in several places with the ravages of war, such as cocoa nut trees with their tops cut off" (Robarts 1974:75).

And on Nuku Hiva, probably at Taipivai (but maybe Hapa'a):

"We lay here [in ambush] several days. At length some of the enemy espied our ambushment as they was rambling thro the woods. They gave the alarm. The enemy fled. We pursued as far as was safe. In our retreat fire was set to the houses, and my party would have beat the bark of the bread fruit trees. By this means the trees would die. But this act I would by no means consent to. For I told them those trees would feed them another day, for it frequently happend that plenty of bread fruit would be in one part of the island when the other parts was starving, the inhabitants dying in great numbers for want of food." (Robarts 1974:115)

<sup>13</sup> One of the dances at this *ko'ika* was about the *Daedalus* visit of about six years earlier (Vancouver 1984:776-783). Crook (1952:clxix) says that, "Keattanue's second brother Tiohea was the person killed by a Man on board the *Daedalus*, on her second Visit to this Island."

<sup>14</sup> The Ahutini at that time controlled Hanatetena and Hanatefau/Hapatonu and the whole island south of there (Denning 1971).

<sup>15</sup> The people of Haka'ehu, related to Taioha'e and sometimes in alliance with them.

<sup>16</sup> 'Atitoka=people of A'akapa; Puhioho=a people from Hatihe'u, some of whom had been at the *ko'ika* and were the usual enemies of the 'Atitoka.

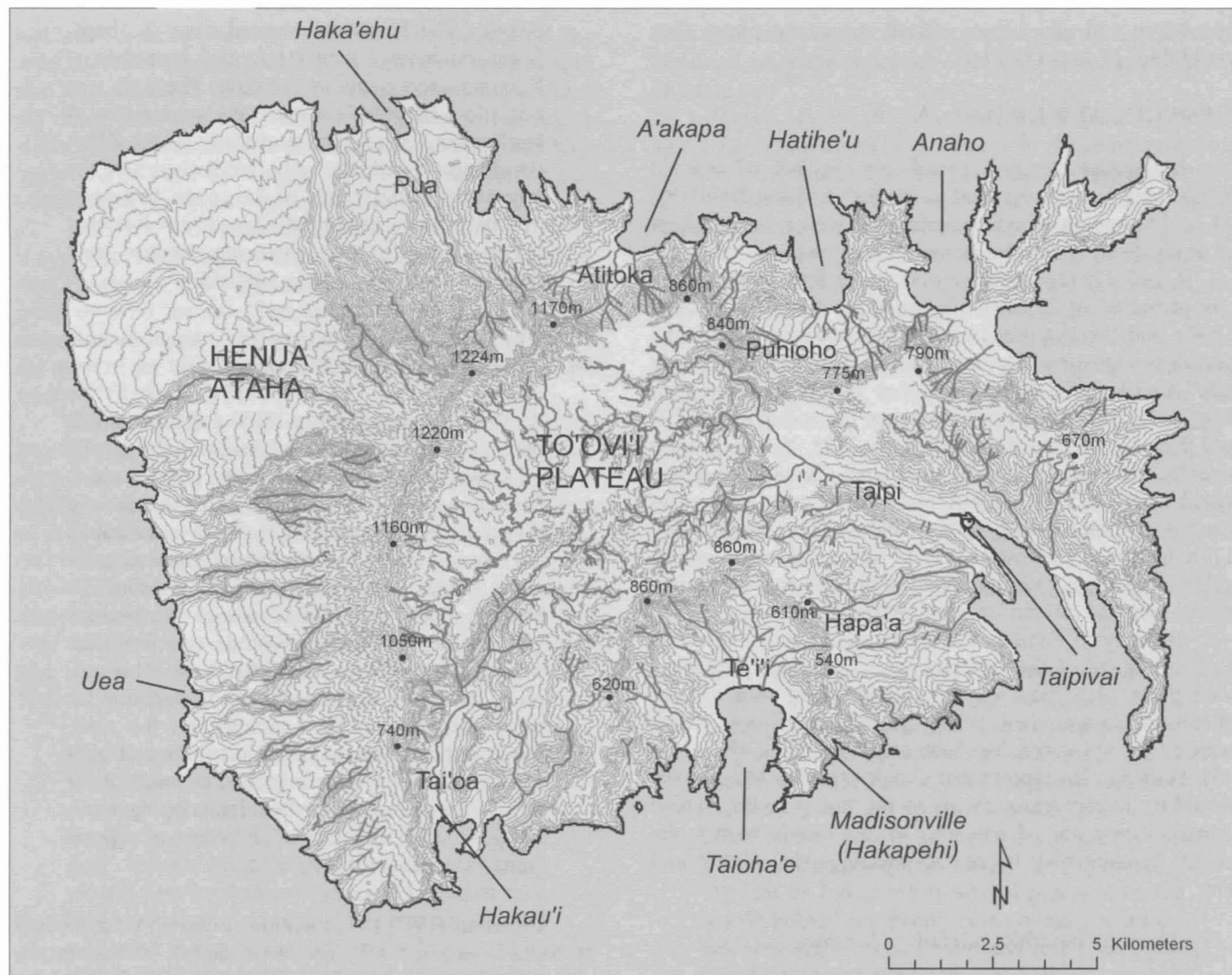


Figure 3. Nuku Hiva showing place names mentioned in text (in italics); group names shown on island.

Porter describes tree destruction at Taioha'e:

"Observing the mountains surrounding the valley to be covered with numerous groups of natives, I inquired the cause, and was informed that a war-like tribe [Hapa'a] residing beyond the mountains had been for several weeks at war with the natives of the valley, into which they had made several incursions, destroyed many houses and plantations, and killed a great number of bread-fruit trees by girdling." (Porter 1970:18-19)

Hapa'a warriors again slipped into Taioha'e:

"In the afternoon several officers went on shore to visit the villages, when I perceived a large body of the Hapahs descending from the mountains into the valley among the breadfruit trees, which they soon began to destroy.... the Hapahs had descended to within half a mile of our

camp, and had succeeded in destroying two hundred bread-fruit trees ..." (Porter 1970:25)

Then, with Porter's help, the Te'i'i had a chance for revenge. After conquering a Hapa'a fort:

"The friendly natives collected the dead, while many ran down to a village situated in the valley, for the purpose of securing the plunder, consisting of large quantities of drums, mats, callabashes [sic], and other household utensils, as well as hogs, cocoa-nuts and other fruit. Also brought with them large quantities of the plant with which they make their finest cloth, which grows nearly as thick as the wrist, and is highly esteemed by them." (Porter 1970:37)

Likewise, after the routing of Taipivai, Porter's Te'i'i allies "loaded themselves with plunder, after destroying

bread-fruit and other trees and all the young plants they could find" (Porter 1970:102).

## DROUGHT AND FAMINE

The Marquesas clearly suffered from periods of reduced rainfall and consequent food shortages (Addison 2006a:34-47 on Marquesan rainfall patterns). However, the numbers of deaths from famine has probably been exaggerated.

Crook (1952:cli) writes of Tahuata that, "Some Scarcity prevailed while the Duff was at the Island [6-27 June 1797]; and the last breadfruit crop of the Year [sometime between August and October] failing, famine was severely felt." Crook (1952:clii) claims that "Many perished with hunger;" apparently this was between the end of June 1797 and the large Mei Nui crop of January 1798. Yet, despite the scarcity, small-scale feasting continued. Teinae had a hog killed when the Duff arrived, and later he and Crook were feasted at Anapo'o then at Hanatetena. Then, "In January 1798, the grand Harvest of Bread Fruit proved very favourable; which the natives attributed to the efficacy of the Sacrifices they had offered" (Crook 1952:cliii).

In reply to Fanning's question about eating raw fish Crook "replied, if the fish was large, and their provisions were plenty, they did cook, but owing to their wars, and the attendant famine, their sufferings for provisions, which were now very scarce, had been great" (Fanning 1833:144-45). Fanning also reports that Crook said that Marquesans would try to capture an enemy to eat during famine. These remarks seem out of character with Crook's written account. Fanning may be sensationalizing what Crook told him.

Thomson describes rainfall at Vaitahu:

"The climate of these Islands is salubrious; rather cool for our geographic position, occasioned by the smallness of the Islands, the extent of ocean around us, and the "fresh blowing" trade wind. Less rain than might be supposed from our situation, neither have we, as far as my observations extend, anything which can be called a rainy season. This season has been particularly dry; streams which are generally full, have been dry for about eight months, the rain gauge has been recently erected and is upon an open space on the leeward side of the island at an elevation of three feet above the ground." (Craig 1980:12)

Thomson writes of Vaitahu, probably in early 1841:

"A few weeks ago, a sacrifice was offered here to propitiate the deity, that he would cause rain to descend and breadfruit to grow. The victim upon this occasion was a boy seized upon the Island of

Hivaoa. The head was severed from the body, fewer ceremonies were performed here than at Nuuhiva upon a similar occasion. The body was taken to a tabued place and hung upon a tree. A smaller cooked pig and a quantity of breadfruit was hung up with the body that the spirit of the boy might in the world of the spirits live upon the spirits of the pig and the breadfruit! It is now hanging upon the tree, about ten minutes' walk from our dwelling." (Craig 1980:35)

Stevenson (1971:50) writes that, "Anaho is known as 'the country without popoi.'" because:

"A few years ago [before 1888] a drought killed the breadfruit trees and the bananas in the district of Anaho; and from this calamity, and the open-handed customs of the island, a singular state of things arose. Well-watered Hatihe'u had escaped the drought; every householder of Anaho accordingly crossed the pass, chose someone in Hatihe'u, and 'gave him his name'—an onerous gift, but not one to be rejected—and from this impoverished relative proceeded to draw his supplies, for all the world as though he had paid for them. Hence a traffic continued on the road. Some stalwart fellow, in his loincloth, and glistening with sweat, may be seen at all hours of the day, a stick across his shoulder, tripping nervously under a double burden of green fruits." (Stevenson 1971:50-51)

Christian (1910:153) mentions a month-long drought on Nuku Hiva (the third week in December, year uncertain, but probably 1899 or 1903). Christian (1910:173) also writes: "But now, alas! from a letter received last year, I see that a grievous drought has fallen upon Vaipae [Vaipa'e'e]. The little stream is dried up, the pigs and dogs are dying ..." Delmas (1927:42) names "Tuhinunuu" as the god that inhibits the breadfruit from producing fruit, the god of famine. He also mentions that this god is said to be honored in times of abundance and thanked for not being too mean for once (Delmas 1927:42).

## ROBARTS – THE ACCURACY OF HIS REMEMBRANCES OF MARQUESAN DROUGHT AND FAMINE

Robarts' journal is replete with instances of his tendency to portray himself as a hero.<sup>17</sup> Often this is accompanied by descriptions that seem to exaggerate difficult situations. This is such a regular feature of his text that I question his description of the severity of drought-induced famine. His descriptions of famine and drought are the longest

<sup>17</sup> In his introduction to the journal, Denning comments on Robarts' use of drama and romance (Robarts 1974:14) and on the accuracy of his observations (1974:19).



and most dramatic that are available. I have put them in a separate section (along with the accounts of the 1804 Russian visit for which he was informer and translator) because the other sources draw a less severe picture. It is left to readers to construct their understanding of drought and famine in the Marquesas. Robarts describes two drought episodes during his almost eight-year residence.

On Hiva 'Oa sometime after 7 March 1799, Robarts states: "Next morning we departed for our mountain habitation. Provisions now began to be very scarce. The land was burnt up with the sun. The trees yield no bread fruit. At times I would visit my friends at Anateetaper<sup>18</sup> ... I passed the most of my time on the mountains, as the low lands had no food" (Robarts 1974:95).

On Nuku Hiva, perhaps two years later, he reports another drought-induced famine.<sup>19</sup> At its beginning, Robarts was visiting A'akapa for a *ko'ika*. A "chief" at A'akapa tried to convince Robarts to stay, saying: "I have of food in store - Plenty. You will not be hungry with me, and if Beauty takes your fancy, have your choice" (Robarts 1974:116). But he decides to return to Taioha'e by a direct route because "I was well informed that the enemy was very weak for want of food, and that their Chiefs would not give any food out of their store pits"<sup>20</sup> (Robarts 1974:117). Back in Taioha'e from A'akapa:

"I was sorry to observe the Bread fruit on the trees began to be very scanty, and the poor people had no food in store. Numbers of poor familys began to feel the fatal effects of famine. I past away several days of visiting my neighbours; for I missed several. I advised they had land on the sides of the mountain the soil was good to plant yams, Plantains & other roots, which would help them greatly in time of need. Some took my advice, and in a few months their labour made a pleasing appearance; while others, indolent, groaned with the pains of hunger and did not clear away their lot of land, for they all could plant plantains among the bread fruit trees"<sup>21</sup> (Robarts 1974:118)

After visiting 'Ua Pou, Robarts (1974:120-21) spent "two or three months" more in Hakau'i then returned to Taioha'e where he "was glad to see a few bread fruit on the trees, but soon these was done, and the dreadfull effects of famine was severely felt in all parts of the Island." A grandmother - Robarts calls her a "prophetess of distinction"—

went into the woods "and there subsisted on the roots of trees and what she could get until the bread fruit began to be fitt to eat."<sup>22</sup>

Robarts (1974:119, italics mine) then goes to Hakau'i where he "spent about four months *in the most agreeable manner*." This was despite the fact that people were supposedly in famine at Taioha'e. Robarts (1974:119) made a three-week trip from Hakau'i to 'Ua Pou where, "On my arrival I was sorry to find the fatall effects of famine was severely felt all over this Island. I made a tour round this Isle. At present [I] found nothing worth notice."

Robarts (1974:122) describes himself as "a mean skeleton" and "extremely weak." A visiting 'Ua Pou chief asked him to go back to his island since "He told me that the people was dead, and now the trees was breaking down with the weight of the Bread fruit. Numbers went over, and canoes, going daily for food, saved a great number from starving to death." He went over and after a month of eating "was able to walk well." Several months later there was a small crop at Taioha'e.

Robarts (1974:273-75) summarizes the Nuku Hiva/'Ua Pou famine as follows:

"My being an eye witness for dearth enables me to give a true account of it. Certainly there is nothing impossible to god, but I thought it very singular that in the same valley in some places the trees would bear a good crop, and in others the trees was burnt up with the sun. In this case some had a little to eat for a short time when others was starving with hunger. On the island of *Woo'ah'bo* I observd in several places, one tree would be witherd down to the ground and all the rest was loaded with fruit round it. I visited this Isle twice during the famine, as I allways made it my object to gain the favour and friendship of the great men and to shew a distant courtesey among the lower class of people. For I well Knew a poor man had but little for himself, when the great men had to spare. For in time of hunger, if a poor man offerd me food to eat, I would take it and thank them, but I returnd it again. A tear of gratitude has often rushed to the eyes to see the hospitality of this poor benighted race of men to an unfortunate stranger. When I was traveling, I would enquire the name of the next Chief, that when any one askd me where I was going my answer was to Chief so & so, and ten to one but

<sup>18</sup> Hana 'iapa.

<sup>19</sup> The duration of this famine is difficult to estimate. Robarts' (1974:123, 273) claim that it lasted for three years is inconsistent with other aspects of his description. It could not have been more than two years for, in his chronological description, it is bracketed (by unknown periods) by two non-famine dates (pg. 114, 11 April 1801 and pg. 124, May 1803). It may have been less than a year; he describes being at Hakau'i and 'Ua Pou for four months of it (pg. 119) and then at Taioha'e for "some months" (pg. 121) and another "two or three" (pg. 122) before there was a breadfruit harvest.

<sup>20</sup> *Mā* pit-silos (Addison 2007).

<sup>21</sup> An example of Robarts as educator and hero.

<sup>22</sup> If taken at face value, this suggests that not all elites had access to *mā* reserves.

he was Informd of my comeing before I reached his territories, and some repast was shure to be ready for me on my arrival.

"Now this Isle ['Ua Pou] was Just beginning to feel the smart of famine when I left it. The poor people was dying fast for want of food. Myself sometimes felt the pains of hunger, but, thanks be to god, I never repined at my lott. I bore it with fortitude and lookd forward With pleasing hope of surmounting the heavy storm that threatened.

"I returnd to *New'ka'hea'va*, where the famine was very severe. For in the next house above my brother in laws house there lived a respectable old Lady – she was a prophetess – with her daughters and grand daughters, twelve in number. The whole died. The old Lady lived to see the days of plenty. I was going past the house one day. It stood on a hill above the other houses. I smelt something very bad. I guest what it was and had it been one or two I might have turnd Sexton. But when I lookd into the house, I was struck at so miserable a sight with such an overflow of grief to see two young women dying for hunger. Several lay in a putrid state, and the two that was alive was too far gone for human relief to be of any use. I withdrew to windward of the house and set myself down on the ground and was lost some time in reflection. At lenght I got up and went home, but I could not forget the awfull sight I had seen.

"There died according to calculation, between 2 and 300 persons in about one year in the Valley I lived in.<sup>23</sup> At length it pleasd god to send relief, for on *Woo ah bo* the famine had ravaged so much that whole valleys was deprivd of their inhabitation, and the trees brought forth such a plentyfull crops that they was breaking with their load, and them that was able used to go over and fetch food. Others would stay there and gather where they could. No one dare say a word, as I had Brought that Isle dependant to my tribe.<sup>24</sup> Canoes was going at all oppertunities. By this means numbers of families was saved from starving (Hunger, my fair reader, is a sharp thorn).

"The Husband in times of famine leaves his wife & family to forage for himself. I have been on the beach when a double canoe loaded with food has landed. Some poor women, whose husband was absent on the other Isle getting plenty, came to ask for a little food to save the lives of some small children. It was refused. Now this load belonged to one family. I hove my spear into the food of one canoe. They loosend the other canoe from it for fear I should take the other also. They could not touch the food my spear was in. I then order the canoe to be unloaded and put the food before me on the Beach. I then shared it out among those that I Knew was most in want." (Robarts 1974:273-75)

Robarts (1974:265) claims that two Taioha'e women were executed for cursing the breadfruit trees during this famine. One was from a "respectable family" and her brother was a "prophet."<sup>25</sup>

Krusenstern is wrong about the Marquesan rainy period:

"The winter months, as is always the case between the tropics, constitute the rainy season; but this is said not to continue long in these islands, ten months and more frequently passing without a drop of rain.<sup>26</sup> When this unfortunately happens, a general famine ensues attended with the most dreadful consequences, and inciting the inhabitants to acts of a more horrible nature than any other people can afford an example of." (Krusenstern 1813:148)

Langsdorff reports not much mortality from famine:

"If it happens, as is sometimes the case, and unhappily was so the year before we were there, that not a drop of rain falls for nine or ten months, a scarcity is the consequence. This *does not occasion much mortality from the mere effects of hunger*, but it gives rise to the most frightful and horrible practices, of which I shall speak more hereafter." (Langsdorff 1813:103, italics mine)

This is an interesting contrast to Robarts' contention that drought killed great amounts of people. This could be argued to be a difference between what Cabri told Langsdorff based on his experience at well-watered Taipivai and what Robarts saw at Taioha'e. It could also be that,

<sup>23</sup> An interesting comment that suggests the famine was only "about one year" long. Given Robarts' tendency to exaggerate, his estimation of the amount of famine deaths should be treated cautiously.

<sup>24</sup> Robarts the savior.

<sup>25</sup> Perhaps a *tau'a*.

<sup>26</sup> This information would have come from Robarts, another reason to believe that the famine a year of so earlier had not lasted more than a year.

with the famine fresh in Roberts' mind, he was more realistic about its fatality than 20 years later when he wrote his account (although he apparently told Lisiansky in 1804 that 400 had died).

Langsdorff continues:

"The men of Nukahiwa, as Roberts and Cabri assured us, will, in times of scarcity, kill and eat their wives and children, but not unless pressed to it by the utmost necessity. The rich islanders, that is, those who possess a superabundance of provisions, appear exempted from being made the sacrifice of such a calamity; at least, in that which happened not many months before our arrival, no one of Katanuah's family had been slaughtered. On the contrary, he, from his own stores, supported twenty-six persons. It seems, therefore, a reasonable presumption that the tattooing and feasting societies had their origin in an endeavour to suppress, as much as possible, this horrid and unnatural practice." (Langsdorff 1813:144)

Lisiansky provides yet another estimate of the number of famine fatalities at Taioha'e:

"In case of a bad harvest the poor suffer dreadfully, as they never lay up a sufficient stock of provisions to prevent the horrors of famine. A few years ago, numbers of them were obliged to roam among the mountains in search of what they could find, leaving their wives and children at home dying with hunger. Roberts told me, that in the bay of Tayohaia only, four hundred perished on this occasion. In these times of dearth, every one was in danger, he said, of losing his life; not only for want of nourishment, but from the violence of one stronger than himself, who may seize and devour him." (Lisiansky 1814:87)

## FAMINE FOODS<sup>27</sup>

Sources identify *ti*, *kape*, *ihi*, *hoi*, banana stalk, and fern root as famine foods (for Latin-English-Marquesan plant names see Addison 2007, Part II, Table).

Crook (1952:cxxx) writes that, "Various species of Fern growing upon the Mountains, afford substitutes, when other kinds of food become scarce." At Vaitahu, "The Summit of the ridge is mostly covered with Trees, and produces a great quantity of the Fern called pahei [*pa'ahe'i* or *puhei?*],

(wild yam) of which the Islanders eat the root, in seasons of Scarcity" (Crook 1952:cxlv).<sup>28</sup>

Roberts (1974:246) notes that, "There is other roots [besides sweet potato and yam] which are eaten in times of scarcity. They are very poor food and bitter."<sup>29</sup> He also mentions *ti* in this context. And "In time of severe hunger I have cutt the body of a plantain tree up and baked it and then pounded it to get out the substance, which, after being washd and straind thro many waters, is still very bitter & cold on the stomach" (Roberts 1974:275).

Roberts writes of a sacrifice at A'akapa perhaps shortly after 11 April 1801:

"It was a young woman of the enemys tribe [who] had been gathering wild chestnuts. It being hungry times, Food was scarce among the poor class of people. She was caught in the woods By a party that had been out to reconite the enemy. As soon as she was caught she was put to death ..." (Roberts 1974:116)

This suggests that *ihi* (Tahitian chestnut) was a famine food. Langsdorff mentions *ti*, *kape*, perhaps *ihi*, and the unidentified "tefah" as famine foods:

"Besides the above common objects of food, there are a number of other fruits and roots, which the inhabitants eat in times of scarcity. As these are only to be found upon high mountains, almost inaccessible, except when hunger urges to finding a way of coming at their products, I could only obtain the names of them. The mahine, probably *anotum fagiferum* is a very good fruit, in flavor like a chestnut; the *tefah*, or *tipah*, is a red fruit never eaten but in times of great want; the *tih* is a thick root, which may be had the whole year round, but, like the *tefah*, it is only considered as a resource in times of scarcity: *cape* is a nourishing food, and is probably the same as the Otaheitean *ape*, and the *cappe* of the Sandwich Islands, *arum macorrhizon*. The land, by a higher degree of cultivation would be capable of producing many very useful objects, as, for instance, the sugar-cane." (Langsdorff 1813:107)

Lisiansky (1814:93), while listing root crops, mentions: "*Hoé* [*hoi*]. A kind of wild potatoe, which has a bitter taste, and affords but little nourishment. It is only used by the islanders in times of famine."

<sup>27</sup> See Addison 2006a, 2006b, and Addison in press for more on Marquesan risk-reduction strategies and responses to drought.

<sup>28</sup> Crook (1952:clxxiv) also notes that the fishermen of "Venua-tahha" (probably Uea) on Nuku Hiva "sometimes climb, the neighbouring hills, to get fern root; but they depend, for every thing else beside fish, upon supplies which they obtain at Hakeuwe [Hakau'i] ..."

<sup>29</sup> Perhaps *hoi* (*Dioscorea bulbifera* L.)

## FISH AND FISHING

Before the establishment of European quadrupeds and the decimation of thousands of Marquesans during the nineteenth century, fish and other marine sources probably provided the major supply of animal protein in the Marquesan diet. As such, it was an important economic activity complementing the production of staple farinaceous crops. Despite the abundance of marine resources and the Marquesans skill at procuring them, there appear to have been periods when little fishing was done (as reported at Taioha'e by the Russians in 1804 and Porter in 1813).

Cook's (1961:365) expedition traded for fish, as did Marchand's (Fleurieu 1801:35). Fleurieu notes that:

"[1791] The sea furnishes excellent rock-fish; the natives supplied the Solide with abundance, and of every quality: the bonito is there very common. According to Captain Chanal's account, the bay is often frequented by porpoises and sharks; Surgeon Roblet, on the contrary, does not think that the latter fish ever makes its appearance there ..."<sup>30</sup> (Fleurieu 1801:92)

Crook writes that:

"[ca. 1798] A considerable part of their subsistence depends upon the produce of the Sea, in which their Country is situated. This is very abundant, and includes the numerous species commonly found in topical Climates, and too well known to require a peculiar description here." (Crook 1952:cxxvii)

Crook describes fishermen at "Venua-tahha" (probably Uea) on western Nuku Hiva around June or July 1798. Crook and Kiatonui went there to see a ship that had visited:

"It affords neither bread fruit, Coco Nuts, nor water, except after rain. The Fishermen, who live in the caves that swarm with Musketoos, sometimes climb, the neighbouring hills, to get fern root; but they depend, for every thing else beside fish, upon supplies which they obtain at Hakeuwe; whither they carry their fish to barter, mostly after having baked it to preserve it from putrefaction." (Crook 1952:clxxiv)

Robarts (1974:89) reports that Hana'iapa had a "fine fishery of bonetos, albacore & other smaller fish, by which a number of poor families are supported. Every day food and cloth is brought to barter for fish from the interior parts in alliance with this valley."

Robarts further describes the fish in Marquesan waters:

"[ca. 1800] The Sea affords a tolerable good stock of fish. There is but few turtle among these Isles. Conger Eels are said to be very large. The Sun Fish are plenty in their season. Fine Mullet frequents these Isles in great schools. The Dolphin, Boneeto, Albacore, carvaley, and sharks are plenty. The flying fish are caught with hand nets in the night time by torch light. They are delicate, sweet eating." (Robarts 1974:249)

Despite turtles being few, Robarts (1974:251) went turtle hunting with "a Chieftain at Towatta."

Krusenstern writes of Marquesan fishing techniques: "[1804] The Nukahiwier has a manner of fishing quite peculiar I believe to himself. They first bruise between stones a species of root that grows among the rocks; the fisherman then dives and strews the bottom with this mashed root, which stupefies the fish to such a degree that they immediately rise to the surface of the water, and are taken without any trouble: They likewise catch fish in nets, but I believe this is the least usual way, as in all the bay of Tayo Hoae there were but eight canoes.<sup>31</sup> The third mode of taking fish is with a hook, made neatly of mother-of-pearl. The fishing line as well as all the string they use, either in the fitting out of their canoes or for other purposes, is made of the bark of the fau tree; but they make another kind of string very smooth and strong of the fibers of the cocoanut. Fishing is, however, an occupation despised by those who possess a piece of land of any extent: and only the poor class of people, who maintain themselves in this manner, give themselves up to it. Although they knew that we would pay them well for fish, they only brought us twice, seven or eight bonitos; a proof that there are but few who employ themselves in this way, and who have not land to cultivate."<sup>32</sup> (Krusenstern 1813:163)

<sup>30</sup> Roblet infers this because Marquesans spend all day in the water and aren't attacked; Fleurieu thinks it a dubious argument.

<sup>31</sup> This seems an unusually low number. Perhaps Krusenstern missed many canoes kept at *oho 'au* (canoe sheds) away from the beach, which he did not see.

<sup>32</sup> Krusenstern was probably told this by Robarts who writes (1974:253): "The fishermen are mostly a set of people that have little or no land. They live in huts on or near the beach. They support their families by fishing which they exchange for food and cloth." To balance this view, there are numerous accounts of high-ranking Marquesans engaging in fishing. Additionally, it is quite possible that the Russians saw little fishing at Taioha'e during their visit because of some ritual restriction. Krusenstern (1813:170) mentions that Taioha'e was halfway through a year of preparing for a feast.



Krusenstern (1813:140-41) writes of Motu Iti (about 45 km west of Nuku Hiva) that: "The inhabitants of the adjoining islands visit them on their fishing excursions; but they never undertake this voyage but when driven to it by the greatest necessity ..." But Crook (1952:cxv) writes that "They go out to considerable distance to fish."<sup>33</sup>

Langsdorff (1813:126) thought that in the diet of the Marquesans "Fish and shell-fish are not held in any esteem ..." He also writes that "Almost all fish are at the time when the bread-fruit is not ripe tabooed, and must not be eaten," which would cause the fruit to fall (Langsdorff 1813:137).

Porter too appears to have been at Taioha'e when there was some sort of restriction on fishing:<sup>34</sup>

"[1813] Fish were not caught in abundance, either by the natives or ourselves; our constant occupations did not admit of our devoting much time to that object, and their mode of fishing might not have succeeded so well as ours. We saw in the bay vast numbers of albacores, or, as they are sometimes called, (and are so called by the natives,) cavallas, which were in constant pursuit of shoals of small fish, not dissimilar in their appearance to the anchovy. Of this small kind of fish, the boys of the ship caught great numbers with a kind of scoop net, alongside the frigate. A small red fish, rather longer and thicker than the finger, was frequently brought to me by the natives, and was remarkable for its delicacy. Several other kinds of fish, some resembling a perch in form and size, and some shaped like a pargee, but with variegated colours, were also brought. But I never at any time saw a large fish which had been taken by them except a devil fish. This last-mentioned fish, with sharks and porpoises, frequent the bay: the manner of catching the latter is truly surprising. When a shoal comes in, they get outside of them with their canoes, and forming a semi-circle, by splashing with their paddles, hallooing, and jumping overboard, so to alarm the fish, that they push for shoal water, and thence to the beach, where the natives pursue and take them. In this manner whole shoals are caught." (Porter 1970:130)

Gracia (1843:145) writes that when communal fishing was undertaken, the catch is divided between all the families of the "tribe." His description of the spirit of festivity that accompanied communal fishing hardly impresses one as the "despised occupation" of only the poorest Marquesans:

"[ca. 1840] Aux Marquises, la pêche se fait avec des accompagnements qui en font tout à la fois un jeu et un fort grand travail, lequel revient très-souvent : il est même des saisons où les nuits d'une lune entière sont occupées par des pêches aux torches et flambeaux, qui sont du bel effet, et donnent parfois à leurs baies la même perspective que l'on pourrait à Paris sur la Seine, illuminée en certaines nuits par les clartés de milles réverbères." (Gracia 1843:149)

Thomson clearly did not have a deep grasp of the social relationships involved in Marquesan fishing and fish distribution:

"[ca. 1840] A few individuals are fishermen; these go out early in the morning in their canoes, and return about 10 o'clock; if successful, their canoe is laden; but no sooner is their canoe drawn up on the reach of those standing by, than their fish are seized and but a small portion rewards the labours of the fishermen. What privileges they enjoy in compensation for their fish, I am not aware ..." (Craig 1980:27)

Thomson writes of Marquesan marine resources: "All kinds of fishes, found within the tropics, seem to frequent the shores of these Islands; small fish of every form and color are found in the neighbourhood of the rocks; but those of most value to the natives are the bonneto; flying fish, guard fish, and one called by the natives *puou*, large quantities of these are taken at sea by line or net. They come at different seasons, so that throughout the year there is a tolerably good supply. Sharks, blackfish, porpoises and devil fish are often killed by harpoon. A few crabs, lobsters, fresh water shrimps, and a few shell fish are found." (Craig 1980:14)

Presumably, the following refers to commercial whaling: "Whales are often taken at the entrance of the passage [Ha'ava Channel]" (Craig 1980:10).

Marquesans had a superior knowledge of marine organisms and their ecology: "Of Ichthyology their knowledge is respectable; very many kinds of little fishes frequent the coast, all of which they know by name, with their habits, what places they frequent, what food they prefer, etc." (Craig 1980:41). Jardin (1862:75-80) lists fish and some details about catching certain ones; he writes that Marquesans counted 140 species.

Christian saw an unusual structure on the trail down into Hana'iapa Valley:

<sup>33</sup> Compare with Dye (1990) or Rolett (1998) who argue for fishing being almost exclusively confined to the inshore.

<sup>34</sup> Porter (1970:38) says that just before their arrival an important priest had been killed and there was a "taboo" the whole time they were at Nuku Hiva (see previous section on *'ahui* and preparation for *ko'ika*).

"[1890s] One remarkable native house on the right-hand side of the road attracts our attention. The platform stands about seven feet high, with several massive blocks of basalt, curiously carved, set into it centre as it faces the road. On one of these a gigantic fish-hook is sculptured in relief; it is the emblem of *Tuha*, god of fishes and fisheries." (Christian 1910:106)

In pointing out the abundance of food in the Marquesas<sup>35</sup> Christian writes that:

"The sea, moreover, is generally a safe draw, and when fish are wanted the sportsmen with rod and net rarely have a blank day out. The dried and salted flesh of the squid (*Hee*) and of the porpoise (*Pa'aoa*) is a good stand-by for those who like strong-flavoured dishes, and the flying-fish (*Mao'o*) and the bonito (*Atu*) recall to a European the pilchard of Cornwall and the mackerel of the Riviera. The women and children manage to pick up plenty of shellfish and sea-eggs (*Vatuke*, *Hetuke*) ..." (Christian 1910:124-25)

Christian (1910:144) was served salted porpoise at Hanapa'aoa.<sup>36</sup>

## VAKA (CANOES)

Visitors to the Marquesas had widely varying opinions of the seaworthiness of Marquesan canoes, even among members of the same expedition. There is enough diversity of opinion to question the oft-repeated claim that Marquesan canoes were risky to travel in.

Fleurieu (1801:117-118) writes that Surgeon Roblet was not impressed, but Captain Chanal said they were well-constructed. Roblet describes them as 20-30 ft long and 12-18 ft wide, sometimes double, sometimes with an outrigger (Robley n.d.:10). They held three to eight people per canoe,<sup>37</sup> and "if the canoe swamps they get out and bail it out then resume as if nothing had happened" (Robley n.d.:11).

Crook (1952:clvii) writes that, "Pahoumouma had lately removed from the Valley to the Sea Side, where he had made a house and plantation, and was engaged in the construction of some Canoes." At Vaitahu, he was a "principal man" hence, here is a situation where an member of the elite is building canoes.

Robarts (1974:246) states that breadfruit trees made "very good canoes," but Krusenstern thought it was used only for inferior vessels:

"The Nukahiva canoes are invariably fitted with outriggers; they are built of three different kinds of wood, on which their goodness depends. Those of the breadfruit and mayo trees are of less value than the others, constructed of a tree called by the Natives, *tamana*;<sup>38</sup> these are more durable, and swifter than the former. They are all very strongly built, and sewed together with threads made of the fibres of the cocoa-nut; the largest we saw was twenty-three feet long, two and half wide, and two and one third feet deep." (Krusenstern 1813:163-64)

Porter (1970:12-13) thought Marquesan canoes unimpressive, but seaworthy: "... the canoes of Nooaheevah, although not so perfect as those of some other islands, are capable of keeping the sea for a great length of time" (Porter 1970:135, italics mine). At Taipivai, "several large and elegant new war canoes, which had never been used, were burned in the houses that sheltered them ..." by Porter and his Te'i'i allies (Porter 1970:102).

Thomson (Craig 1980:19) writes that "Temanu. Is valued highly for making the bottom part of their canoes." But, "the canoes of the present day [ca. 1840] could not accomplish a voyage to the nearest Islands from the Marquesas. Not even with safety even from the one end of this group to the other" (Craig 1980:22). He continues:

"... perhaps their canoes are the worst in the south seas; not at all neat, but strong. They generally carry from four to ten men; large canoes lashed together sail from one island to another; five or six come from Fatuhiva to Tahuata in the course year. They come down with the trade wind, but cannot return without a westerly wind waiting for which they are often detained here many weeks.

"War canoes are large and carry from twenty to thirty men, although common canoes are also used upon such occasions; canoes have generally a *temanu* bottom as large as the tree will allow, upon the upper edge of which breadfruit planks ten or twelve inches deep are fastened to answer the purpose of a gunwale or washboard; they are fastened with cinet and the joint in filled with cocoanut husk to answer the purpose of oakum and render it watertight. Single canoes are kept steady by an outrigger." (Craig 1980:28)

Jouan (1884:143) seems one of the few European captains who thought Marquesans could sail anywhere without dying. He writes [ca. 1850] that, until recently, it

<sup>35</sup> It should be remembered that this was after the devastating depopulation of the nineteenth century.

<sup>36</sup> Ironically the name can be glossed "Porpoise Cove".

<sup>37</sup> This seems a low number for the size canoes he describes.

<sup>38</sup> *Temanu* (*Calophyllum inophyllum* L.)

was common for whalers to sell their whaleboats once a whaling campaign was over and before returning home. Marquesans continued building small canoes that were good for sheltered bays, but not adequate for long voyages on the open ocean (Jouan 1884:139 note 1). Thomson (Craig 1980:31) mentions Marquesans at Vaitahu using whaleboats around 1840. Perhaps the trend towards using European boats for longer trips was beginning by 1813. Porter (1970:13-14) writes that he saw something similar to whaleboats under construction, but none were on the water.

## TRAVEL

Two commonly repeated ideas need revaluation in light of the passages below that document regular travel amongst the islands of the Marquesas (Figure 4). Canoes were evidently seaworthy enough for people to regularly trust them for inter-island travel, and there is little to indicate that islands were isolated from each other.

Crook describes "Poutinne"<sup>39</sup> of Hakau'i's 1798 trip around the Marquesas:

"In the fall of the Year, Tahouatta [Tahuata] was visited by Poutinne, Chief of a district of Nuguheva, who spent most of the Year on a Voyage to all the Windward Islands, taking Fettu-eva [Fatu Iva] first. When at Witahhu [Vaitahu], he unfortunately prevailed upon Unnuwau to part with

the Male Kid which was then well grown, so that it is impossible for Goats to breed at the Marquesas, without a fresh supply. Poutinne proceeded to Hevaoa [Hiva 'Oa] from Tahouatta." (Crook 1952:clviii)

Poutinne's journey continued:

"The Hekkaeke of Tioa [*haka'iki* of Tai'oa], is Poukinne, already mentioned as having visited Tahouatta; and the other Windward Islands in 1798. He remained a considerable time at Hevaoa, from whence he was accompanied home by two of the Piggena,<sup>40</sup> named Huetépa [*sp?* typescript hard to read] and Humugege [*ditto*]; the former of whom is a very principal Man. He did not return to Nuguheva, till toward the close of November; and having imported one of the Goats from Tahouatta, he takes it every where with him, even to the field of battle. ... As Poukinne<sup>41</sup> is *fond of rambling to other Islands*, Uuhevei [his wife; in the same paragraph he spells her name Uuhwei] seems to consider herself as under no necessity of restriction to the Company of her Pekkeyo."<sup>42</sup> (Crook 1952:clxxi, *italics mine*)

Capt. Fanning of the *Betsy* offered Crook passage from Tahuata to Nuku Hiva. On the way they stopped at 'Ua Pou at "...a Valley, called Okkaotu, opens to the Southern part of the Bay, which is but thinly populated" of which "Oeeinue" was the "principal resident" (Crook 1952:clxv).<sup>43</sup> The "*Betsy* proceeded that night to Nuguheva; *whither Oeeinue followed, the next day*" (Crook 1952:clxv, *italics mine*).

From 'Ua Pou "*A constant intercourse is maintained with Nuguheva, and sometimes hostilities were practiced, but not often. Tahouatta is too remote to admit of hostile visits to this Island; but the Natives from thence, come to obtain Ginger, in exchange for Ornaments and Hogs*" (Crook 1952:clxv, *italics mine*).

Shortly after Crook moved to Nuku Hiva, he sent a message to friends on Hiva 'Oa with "a party that was going to Hevaoa ..." (Crook 1952:clxxii). They were probably the party traveling to Hana'iapa: "About a fortnight after Mr. Crook's removal to Nuguheva, several of the natives of that Island set out for Unnatetappa ..." (Crook 1952:clx).

While living on Hiva 'Oa, Robarts (1974:66) saw high-ranking visitors from Nuku Hiva; a "Great

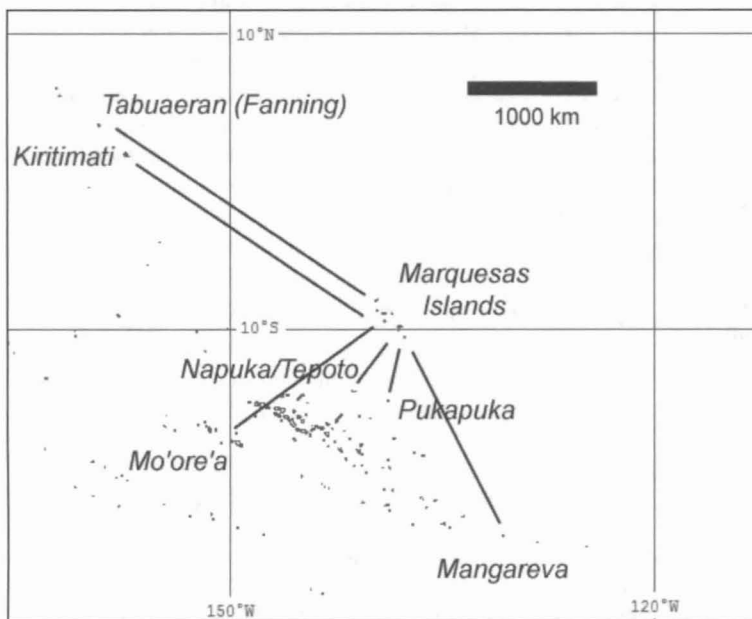


Figure 4. Islands linked to the Marquesas through geochemical analysis of basalt tools or oral tradition (Napuka/Tepoto, Pukapuka).

<sup>39</sup> Poutini: many pillars (posts); Pōtini: many nights. The fact that one of the families descended from this chief is named Taupōtini suggests perhaps the latter is correct.

<sup>40</sup> Pikina.

<sup>41</sup> See footnote in the section on *ti* for a discussion of /t/-/k/ interchangeability in Marquesan.

<sup>42</sup> *Pekio* or supplementary husband.

<sup>43</sup> This was almost surely Hakaotu on the western tip of 'Ua Pou.

quantity food was prepared ... A fine hog was killed and baked and plenty of fish with everything suitable." He notes that "It is a general rule among these Isles when a canoe goes on a visit or bartering trip to take a present ..."<sup>44</sup> (Robarts 1974:96). On arriving at Ua Huka "I had many presents made me from people of rank and several hogs roasted" (Robarts 1974:96).

Robarts (1974:119) writes, "At length her Brother [a chief at Hakau'i] was fitting out a canoe to go over to the opposite Island, called *Woo ah bo* ['Ua Pou], about 15 Leagues distance." This may have been Crook's "Poutinne" who, while touring the Marquesas, stopped at Vaitahu where he met Crook and acquired one of the two goats in the archipelago.<sup>45</sup> Several 'Ua Pou people returned with Robarts to Nuku Hiva "to purchase large canoes for the purpose of leaving their country to go search of other land, where plenty of food is abounding. The prophets pretend to have seen in a dream fine countrys a few days sailing distant. This the poor deluded people believe and leave in numbers the land that gave them breath" (Robarts 1974:119).

Porter (1970:51-52) heard of expeditions leaving the Marquesas to search and settle other islands. He mentions Kiatonui's grandfather, and another named "Temaa Tipee" who had left a few years before Porter. The beachcomber Wilson, Porter's main informant and translator (whom he later learned not to trust), told Porter that eight-hundred people that he knew of had left in this manner. Porter notes that Marquesans can name six islands outside their archipelago.<sup>46</sup>

When "the Kings mother, wanted to send her nephew to *Towatta* with some loaves of Baked Tumeric on sale," she asks Robarts to take him in Robarts' newly rebuilt whaleboat (Robarts 1974:148).<sup>47</sup> Langsdorff (1813:103) writes that the "Easterly trade wind called tiutiu and is strongest in autumn. Southwest wind called tuwatone, this is the prevailing wind in the winter and the inhabitants avail themselves of it to visit the neighboring islands."<sup>48</sup> Langsdorff (1813:104) writes that it took "the natives 3 days to sail to Santa Christina [Tahuata]" (presumably from Nuku Hiva). During a famine at Taioha'e, Robarts (1974:122) describes "canoes, going daily for food" to 'Ua Pou—a trip of about 45 km each direction.

Thomson quantifies travel between Fatu Iva and Tahuata:

"[ca. 1840] ... large canoes lashed together sail from one island to another; five or six come from Fatuhiva to Tahuata in the course year. They come down with the trade wind, but cannot return without a westerly wind waiting for which they are often detained here many weeks." (Craig 1980:28)

Thomson (Craig 1980:31) writes, "A short time ago, the chief of Tahuata, was invited over to assist a friendly tribe upon Hivaoa, who had been driven out from their land. About sunset upwards of twenty canoes and whaleboats sailed from the harbour ..."

"The chief of Uapoa, Feato, who has obtained the dominion of the whole Island by conquest, is here now upon a visit to Totete, the first ever paid between chiefs of the windward and leeward islands. Formerly it was almost impossible, but now they have boats which can stand the sea better than their canoes."<sup>49</sup> (Craig 1980:45)

The historic evidence presented in Part III suggests that several long-held thoughts about traditional Marquesan practices may need review. Although drought and famine did occur, the severity and extent may have been more limited than as been previously portrayed – perhaps not incomparable in scale to periodic famine faced in other parts of Polynesia.

Marquesans had the ability to sail safely around their archipelago, and used that ability frequently. The idea of isolated communities confined to a single island is untenable. Likewise, Marquesans appear to have regularly fished beyond the near-shore. Fishing was not the occupation of only poverty-stricken outcasts. The historic sources do not support fishing being confined to certain groups, indeed elites clearly lived at the beach and were involved in canoe building and fishing activities.

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<sup>44</sup> He writes that you always receive more than you give when you go visiting or trading (Robarts 1974:96).

<sup>45</sup> Dening (Robarts 1974:118 note 32) discusses "her Brother's" possible identity.

<sup>46</sup> It has long been thought that this was an important process in the pre-European history of Polynesia; how great the numbers were is debatable. It should be noted that both Porter and Robarts were in the Marquesas decades after the beginning of sustained European contact and that both Hawaiian and Tahitian beachcombers had stayed there prior to their visits. The possibility exists that Marquesan geographic knowledge and interest in long-distance voyaging was renewed by these contacts.

<sup>47</sup> Robarts assumes the motivation for this request was the superior seaworthiness of his vessel. It could, in fact, have been because of the prestige associated with this novel transport.

<sup>48</sup> Compare Handy (1923:355) tiu=north wind, tokoao=west wind, tuatona=east wind; and Dordillon (1904:267, 270, 275) tokoa'u [sic, toko'au]=west wind, tuatoka/tuatona=east wind, tiu=north wind, tiu tokoau=northwest wind; (Crook, et. al. 1998:17, 48) duatóna/Duatoka=east wind, téutéu=north wind.

<sup>49</sup> Heato and Iotete; Thomson is mistaken about this being the first visit of its kind.



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